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Sent: 12/13/2018 3:49:40 PM
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Subject: FW: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - Thursday, December 13, 2018

Commentary: Cosmo Servidio: Reeling back massive federal overreach

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL Upon taking office, President Donald Trump initiated a process to review and replace unnecessary regulatory barriers to job creation and economic growth, which included the Obama Administration's 2015 definition of "waters of the United States." This week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Army are delivering on the president's agenda by proposing a new definition for "waters of the United States." The proposal would end years of uncertainty over where federal jurisdiction begins and ends. It would clarify the role of our state and tribal partners — and help them more effectively and efficiently manage their land and water resources. And, it would not exceed the limited powers that the federal government has been given under the Constitution and the Clean Water Act to regulate navigable waters. While excessive federal regulations often delay or prohibit American businesses from investing in infrastructure or land development projects that will create jobs, grow crops and improve how we manage our natural resources — our new proposal would facilitate critical infrastructure projects, reduce barriers to business development, and support economic growth by making it easier to understand where the Clean Water Act applies — and where it does not. Under the [2015 definition](#), farmers, landowners, municipalities, and businesses are spending too much time and money trying to determine whether waters on their land are "waters of the United States" and therefore subject to federal regulation under the Clean Water Act. Under the proposal, traditional navigable waters, tributaries, certain lakes and ponds, impoundments of jurisdictional waters, wetlands adjacent to jurisdictional waters, and certain ditches, such as those used for navigation or affected by the tide, would be federally regulated... Since the beginning of this administration, EPA and the Army have been committed to an open and transparent process for reviewing the definition of "waters of the United States" and the scope of federal authority under the Clean Water Act. The agencies sought feedback from a broad variety of stakeholders and have developed a proposed rule that reflects the diverse input that was submitted. The agencies' proposal is now open for public review for 60 days after the rule is published in the Federal Register. Trump understands that we can have clean air, clean water and a strong economy. By providing greater certainty to states and the regulated community, our proposed definition will streamline and accelerate important projects throughout the nation while continuing to protect our nation's waters. This means that farmers and other hardworking Americans will spend less time and money determining whether they need a federal permit and more time growing crops, building homes, modernizing infrastructure, creating jobs and improving the lives of their fellow citizens.

EPA names new leader for Chesapeake Bay Program Office

CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday announced that it had selected a longtime Pennsylvania environmental official to head its Chesapeake Bay Program Office. EPA Region III Administrator Cosmo Servidio named Dana Aunkst, who has held a number of positions with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection over the years and authored its Chesapeake Bay "reboot strategy to oversee the office which coordinates state and federal Bay restoration efforts. "He has tremendous skill at building partnerships and creating a shared vision among geographically diverse stakeholders," Servidio said. "His experience and relationships with multiple agencies will serve us and our partners well as we accelerate efforts to safeguard the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources." Aunkst has worked for 33 years on environmental programs in private industry as well as local and state government. Since 2002, he has worked at the Pennsylvania DEP where he has served in a number of positions, including deputy

secretary and acting secretary. “This is a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners,” Aunkst said. “I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation’s largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.” He also served as deputy secretary for field operations, overseeing six offices in implementing the full array of state and federal regulatory programs. As executive deputy secretary of operations he oversaw the activities of more than 2,000 professional and technical staff engaged in all aspects of environmental protection. As deputy secretary of water, he oversaw programs for surface and groundwater quality; soil and water conservation; public water withdrawals; sewer facilities planning; and industrial discharges. In that job, he also led efforts in 2016 to write the strategy to reboot the state’s Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts after it had fallen far behind and faced potential action from the EPA. Since then, the agency has been working to implement that strategy. “Dana is a results– and data-driven manager of environmental programs and will be a good fit with the professional staff at EPA,” said David E. Hess, former DEP secretary. “Pennsylvania is the linchpin to meeting Chesapeake Bay Watershed cleanup goals, and he knows our state well. The challenge will be to dedicate enough federal and Pennsylvania resources to the program to accomplish those goals.” Aunkst’s appointment comes at a key time, as one Bay Program challenge in coming years will be working with Pennsylvania to accelerated cleanup efforts — the state contributes more water-fouling nutrients to the Chesapeake than any other jurisdiction, but is far behind in its share of the cleanup effort...

Frustrations continue at military meeting on PFAS cleanup

BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES Residents and officials expressed frustration with the speed of chemical clean-up at the former NAS-JRB Willow Grove at a meeting Wednesday. In theory, the quarterly meetings held by the military to update the public on cleanup operations at the former NAS-JRB Willow Grove are supposed to foster good relations with the community. Maybe next time. The latest meeting held Wednesday at the Horsham Township Library followed a similar trend from others in the recent past as residents, municipal leaders and elected officials peppered military representatives with questions and criticisms regarding ongoing PFAS chemical contamination at the former base, as well as the still active Horsham Air Guard Station. “I’m shocked. And frustrated,” said an exasperated state Rep. Todd Stephens, R-151, of Horsham, at one point in the meeting. Stephens was joined by Horsham council President Greg Nesbitt, resident and activist Hope Grosse, and other audience members in criticizing the pace of the response. The PFAS issue blew open in 2014, when the chemicals were discovered in unsafe amounts in local drinking water wells, after they were used for decades in firefighting foams. The scope of the problem has only grown in years since, eventually impacting about 15 public and more than 200 drinking water wells in the area, affecting the drinking water of some 70,000 people. Military representatives at the meeting detailed some steps they’ve taken toward trying to get a handle on the widespread environmental contamination. But during question and answer sessions, members of the public clearly weren’t satisfied. “One of the uniform complaints of anybody in administration from any of the municipalities surrounded by the bases is the timing and pace of all of this. And we’re frustrated, obviously,” Nesbitt said. “Everybody in this room wants to see progress.” ...

Virginia Gov. Northam proposes more money for a cleaner Chesapeake Bay

WASHINGTON POST RICHMOND — Gov. Ralph Northam on Wednesday called for “historic” investments in a cleaner Chesapeake Bay, proposing a five-year plan that he said would represent the largest investment ever in Virginia’s water quality. Northam (D) said his plan would help farmers as well as urban and suburban communities limit runoff that pollutes the bay, boost staff at the Department of Environmental Quality and add funding for land conservation. “There is no time like the present to take action to ensure the protection of Virginia’s natural resources, and these historic investments will ensure that the Commonwealth honors its commitments to improve water quality and to protect the progress we’ve made on restoring the Chesapeake Bay,” Northam said in a statement. The measures, which Northam will formally propose Tuesday in a speech to the General Assembly’s money committees, drew praise from environmentalists, who helped bankroll his 2017 bid for governor but have been bitterly disappointed by his handling of two natural gas pipelines being built in

the state. There was no sign that the governor's bay cleanup plan would soften their take on the pipelines. "I think our stance all along has been to kind of decouple those things, recognize progress when there's progress," said Lee Francis, deputy director of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters. "There's going to be areas where we disagree."...

Proposed rollback of federal water protection rules would leave wetlands along Chesapeake Bay at risk, report says

VIRGINIA MERCURY President Donald Trump's administration's proposed rollbacks to federal clean water regulations would strip some wetlands, as well as headwater streams, in Virginia of federal protections and leave them vulnerable to pollution and real estate development, a report says. The new rules would redefine which "waters of the U.S." are protected under the Clean Water Act and proposes removing isolated wetlands that are not connected to waterways large enough for vessels like boats and ships to pass. That would revoke protections for the "Delmarva Potholes," about 54 square miles, or 34,000 acres, of wetlands on the Delmarva Peninsula, which is part of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, according to a new report from the Environmental Integrity Project. The wetlands are important to the Chesapeake Bay because they filter pollutants, such as farm runoff, out of the bay. State protections, according to the Environmental Integrity Project, aren't as strong as the combination of state and federal oversight that currently exists. "Clean water is a right, not a luxury," said Lisa Feldt, vice president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, in a statement. "Now is not the time for the federal government to weaken efforts to reduce pollution." According to the report, Virginia is one of 13 states with laws that prohibit its own wetland rules from being more restrictive than federal regulations. "That means that a rollback of the federal wetlands regulations would, by definition, mean a rollback of state wetlands protections, too," the report states... The proposed rule changes would also leave thousands of miles of streams at risk, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has suggested removing ephemeral streams — those that flow only after rain or snowfall — as a protected category. Such a move would create unnecessary confusion about which streams enjoy protections and which don't, the group asserts, "and leave an unknown number of streams unprotected." "In the Chesapeake region, streams and tributaries in the upper reaches of the Susquehanna, Potomac, Shenandoah, James and many other rivers, as well as a huge number of wetlands, would not receive protections under the Trump administration's heartless scheme to repeal the Clean Water Rule," Betsy Nichols, executive director of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, said a statement.

Teenager's asthma, in shadow of Clairton Coke Works, frames town's struggle with dirty air

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA From her front porch, Collette Williams can see the lights of US Steel's Clairton Coke Works, the largest coke plant in North America, between the houses across the street. She can also pick out the different colors of smoke and steam emanating from it. "That's like a white smoke," she said, standing on her porch on an overcast afternoon. "And then over there, like a dark smoke." The fumes that day weren't too bad, owing to rain that had just come through. But on some days, the rotten egg odor of sulfur is inescapable, a rich, earthy smell that sticks to the back of the throat. The smell may be bad, but what's in the air may be worse, especially for her son, SaVaughn. He's 13. And the sixth grader has persistent asthma. He takes four medications daily — a regimen of inhalers and nebulizers and pills to calm the inflammation that can make it hard for him to catch his breath. Collette won't let him play football because if he catches a cold by playing in cold weather, he could have bad breathing for weeks. Instead of walking to school in the winter, he gets a bus, to avoid risking getting sick. But there's one trigger that's hard to avoid: some of the dirtiest air in the country. "The pollution in here in Clairton is horrible," she said. "When the smoke comes up, smoke rises so it comes immediately up here." He can't play sports at a local ball field across the street from the plant because of the fumes. Even if they ride by the plant in her car, the smell can trigger SaVaughn, she says. Williams says the coke works deserves at least some of the blame for her son's breathing problems...

Coal ash debate continues: Should it be buried or hauled away?

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH DUMFRIES — Legislation to address 27 million cubic yards of toxic coal ash stored underground across Virginia could include a prohibition on burying in place any coal ash, said Sen. Scott Surovell, D-Fairfax, one of the leading legislators working on the issue. “We’re not going to leave this stuff where it is, in these old clay-lined, partially lined ponds and put a really thick rubber thing on it... We’re not going to do that,” Surovell said. “We’re either going to recycle or clean close — dig it up all the way.” Surovell was speaking before a crowd of 50 people at a town hall at Dumfries Elementary near Dominion Energy’s Possum Point Power Station. His comments clashed with those of Dominion Energy’s Director of Environmental Services Jason E. Williams, who said a “hybrid” approach that includes some burial of coal ash is “what’s likely an ideal path forward.” The heated public event saw residents push for the ash to be removed from the giant ponds where it is stored, alleging pollution to nearby waterways and private wells. Dominion Energy representatives, meanwhile, defended the managing of the ponds, denying any contamination. Coal ash, a byproduct of burning coal, contains heavy metals including arsenic and mercury. The town hall is the third since Dominion released a report last month, at the urging of state lawmakers, saying it would cost ratepayers across the state roughly \$5.7 million to excavate and recycle just under half the ash stored in the state. The event was hosted by Surovell and Delegates Jennifer Carroll Foy, D-Woodbridge, and Luke Torian, D-Prince William...

What You Need to Know If You Already Scheduled Leave and Your Agency Shuts Down

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE Some federal workers who booked vacations between Christmas and the end of the year could find themselves taking unpaid leave for the trouble, if Congress cannot reach a deal to fund the government within the next 10 days. Lawmakers have until Dec. 21 to come to an agreement to fund a variety of agencies and departments that don't already have full-year appropriations or there will be a partial government shutdown. Among those still awaiting a funding bill are the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, State, Interior, Agriculture, Treasury, Commerce, Homeland Security and Justice departments. A partial closure is looking more likely after a meeting Tuesday between President Trump and Democratic leaders that devolved into a shouting match, in which Trump said he would be “proud” to shut down the government if he did not receive a bill with \$5 billion in funding for his proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. If an agreement cannot be reached by the Dec. 21 deadline, where does that leave federal employees when it comes to previously scheduled time off? Workers cannot substitute paid leave for furloughs if the government is closed. This means that if an employee has already scheduled leave, either for a vacation or medical leave, those paid days off would be cancelled during a shutdown. Workers would have to accept unpaid furloughs. Congress often approves shutdown pay retroactively for furloughed workers, meaning those who took vacation during their furloughs could eventually get paid for the days they were gone, but those days would not be counted as vacation time. For employees deemed essential by their agency, the outlook is bleak. Their already scheduled leave would be cancelled during a shutdown and they would be required to come into work or be labeled “Absent Without Official Leave.” According to guidance from the Office of Personnel Management, there are some flexibilities encouraging managers to allow essential employees to use telework or alternative work schedules in cases where they must be absent for “brief or intermittent periods.” If those programs cannot sufficiently accommodate the employee or the agency, the agency must furlough the employee for the time he or she misses.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Eagles’ Lincoln Financial Field Awarded Gold LEED Certification For Energy Use The Eagles announced this week that Lincoln Financial Field has earned a LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council for, among other things, operating 100 percent on clean energy, diverting 99 percent of waste from landfills,

and phasing out plastics at concession stands. LEED is a global program for green-building certification with four levels, a base certification and silver, gold, and platinum. Lincoln Financial Field, which opened in 2003, achieved silver in 2013. Five years later, it reached gold. "Reaching LEED Gold status is a tremendous accomplishment for our organization," Eagles president Don Smolenski said in a statement. "Since opening Lincoln Financial Field in 2003, we have been steadfast in our commitment to sustainable business practices." Mahesh Ramanujam, president of the Green Building Council, called Lincoln Financial Field "innovative," and said it has lowered carbon emissions and reduced operating costs while using sustainable practices...

Commentary: Environmental Protection Agency's assault on the Northeast continues Why is Andrew Wheeler's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continuing to ignore science and intervene in the economy, rigging the marketplace to put the interests of the ethanol lobby before the needs of the American people? Congress created the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) to protect the environment, but studies – even ones from the EPA - suggest it's made things worse, reducing air quality by increasing atmospheric pollutants. Both Democrats and Republicans acknowledge the extent of the problem, with some of the law's original, most passionate supporters now calling it a mistake. Yet, thanks to Andrew Wheeler's EPA, it's now getting bigger. In a massive blow to President Trump's industrial base, the agency recently elevated the volume requirement for advanced biofuel and total renewable fuel in 2019 by a whopping 630 million gallons...

Commentary: Government shouldn't pay to solve toxic lead problem So many things went wrong for the children of Flint and now we know that the root of the problem was failure of the government to ensure the safety of their water supply. Finally, Flint's lead poisoning crisis has begun to subside. The latest data reveals that 146 children under six years in Flint and its Genesee County suburbs tested positive for lead poisoning in 2016. It's a very different story here. The latest Pennsylvania data shows a shocking 3,415 children living in Philadelphia and its suburbs tested positive for lead poisoning. While government in-action is one reason these children will never reach their full God-given potential, it's not the only reason. If our region's rate of childhood lead poisoning was consistent with the rate that Flint experienced when their water supply was tainted with lead, 1,460 children in Phila and the suburbs would have tested positive, not more than 3,400. As outrageous as it may be, the truth is that the rate of children in Southeastern Pennsylvania whose lives will be forever damaged by lead is six times greater here than in Flint. Here, most of our kids are mostly being poisoned in their homes by the remnants of lead paint. Yet our kids' tragedies are not getting national attention... That's why we applaud the leadership of Montgomery and Lehigh counties for asking the courts in Pennsylvania to review the facts and make that same determination. These public officials are true champions for children and deserve the praise and gratitude of every resident of their respective counties. Ideally other county officials and the City of Philadelphia also will turn their sights on the companies that are truly responsible for the toxic legacy of lead in our homes and join these counties in court. Unlike the water crisis in Flint, these companies, not the government, are logical source of the funds needed to get the lead out of our homes and safe our children from the inalterable consequences of lead poisoning.

Did Philadelphia make a terrible mistake getting rid of the Chestnut Street Transitway? The bus-only corridor was blamed for killing retail on Chestnut Street. Today, Philadelphia is more worried about traffic congestion than losing foot traffic. It was one of those sparkling, late Saturday afternoons in December when Chestnut Street in Center City looked like a stage set for a Christmas movie. Every store glowed with light, and package-laden shoppers skipped merrily along the sidewalks. Unfortunately, I was stuck on the 42 bus, trying to get across town to meet friends. Almost as soon as I boarded at 21st Street, the driver encountered a parked car in what is supposed to be a bus-only lane. The street was jammed with traffic, making it hard to change lanes. Pedestrians passed us as we inched toward 17th Street, where a tide of humanity flooded the crosswalks and kept cars from turning right. After several light-cycle changes, the bus plunged forward half a block, only to be thwarted by an Uber pickup. Another half block on, at 15th Street, everything came to a halt: A VIP party bus lazed idly in front Del Frisco's, one set of wheels straddling the left lane, making it impossible for anyone to squeeze past...

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Pa. drafts new limits on air pollution from gas wells as feds reconsider rules

Pennsylvania environmental regulators are rolling out draft rules for controlling air pollution from the state's thousands of existing oil and gas wells on Thursday, but the long-awaited measures have a shaky federal foundation. The state Department of Environmental Protection's proposed rules for cutting smog-forming compounds are based on Obama-era guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that the Trump administration is proposing to withdraw. The new state proposal is designed to curb direct emissions and leaks of volatile organic compounds from older well sites, storage tanks and other oil and gas facilities that aren't covered by air pollution rules that DEP adopted earlier this year. The proposed rules would not directly control emissions of methane, but they are expected to cut down on leaks of the powerful greenhouse gas as a side benefit because volatile organic compounds and methane commingle in natural gas. Companies would also have to search for, and repair, methane leaks as part of routine monitoring surveys included in the proposal. In documents prepared for an advisory board meeting where DEP will discuss the draft on Thursday, the agency said it plans to develop regulations for existing oil and gas facilities "despite EPA's proposed withdrawal" because doing so will demonstrate that additional emissions reductions from existing oil and gas sites "are technically and economically feasible." The U.S. EPA said in March that withdrawing its guidelines "would not prevent states from independently taking steps to reduce emissions from the oil and gas industry if they choose to do so." Still, Pennsylvania DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell opposed the withdrawal proposal, writing to the ...

Acid mine drainage must be dealt with along Southern Beltway

Building the next section of the Southern Beltway will involve a challenge the Pennsylvania Turnpike doesn't often deal with: acid mine drainage. Officials told residents that acid mine drainage near the construction of two curved bridges over Noblestown Road in Robinson Township, Washington County, will be one of the first things to be dealt with after work begins on the next section of the toll road early next year. Residents reviewed plans for the project during an open house Wednesday at the Fort Cherry Golf Club near McDonald. Trumbull Corp. received a \$116.2 million contract to build 2.75 miles of the highway from Quicksilver Road to the Panhandle Trail. That plan calls for installing a passive limestone treatment system, Mr. Hrvoich said. Crews will build a collection basin 10 to 12 feet deep filled with limestone, which the contaminated water will pass through for mitigation...

Most Pa. lawmakers voted yes on farm bill

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PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Letter: Learn about Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act On Nov. 27, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (EICD) was introduced in the House by both Democratic and Republican members of Congress. Here's why that is good news: ...

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

Teenager's asthma, in shadow of Clairton Coke Works, frames town's struggle with dirty air From her front porch, Collette Williams can see the lights of US Steel's Clairton Coke Works, the largest coke plant in North America, between

the houses across the street. She can also pick out the different colors of smoke and steam emanating from it. "That's like a white smoke," she said, standing on her porch on an overcast afternoon. "And then over there, like a dark smoke." The fumes that day weren't too bad, owing to rain that had just come through. But on some days, the rotten egg odor of sulfur is inescapable, a rich, earthy smell that sticks to the back of the throat. The smell may be bad, but what's in the air may be worse, especially for her son, SaVaughn. He's 13. And the sixth grader has persistent asthma. He takes four medications daily — a regimen of inhalers and nebulizers and pills to calm the inflammation that can make it hard for him to catch his breath. Collette won't let him play football because if he catches a cold by playing in cold weather, he could have bad breathing for weeks. Instead of walking to school in the winter, he gets a bus, to avoid risking getting sick. But there's one trigger that's hard to avoid: some of the dirtiest air in the country. "The pollution in here in Clairton is horrible," she said. "When the smoke comes up, smoke rises so it comes immediately up here." He can't play sports at a local ball field across the street from the plant because of the fumes. Even if they ride by the plant in her car, the smell can trigger SaVaughn, she says. Williams says the coke works deserves at least some of the blame for her son's breathing problems...

Trump administration rolls back Obama-era water protections A new Trump administration rule aims to roll back clean water protections the Obama administration put in place, removing federal oversight of many small streams and wetlands. Signed by President Barack Obama in 2015, the Waters of the U.S. rule — sometimes referred to as WOTUS or the Clean Water Rule — clarified and expanded government oversight of waterways covered by the Clean Water Act. It regulated runoff from pesticides and fertilizers into "intermittent streams" — which run only during or after a rainfall — as well as contamination of many other waterways and wetlands that had not previously been regulated under the law. But under the new rule, Clean Water Act regulations will apply only to major, navigable waterways, the tributaries that feed into them, and adjacent wetlands, along with certain lakes, reservoirs and ponds. At a news conference Tuesday, acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the new rule "puts an end to the previous administration's power grab." But condemnation by local environmental leaders was swift. "The Trump administration's proposal to roll back federal rules on clean water abandons our moral obligation to protect the environment for our children and grandchildren," said New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine McCabe in a statement. "It creates a 'race to the bottom,' encouraging states to loosen their own regulations and penalizing those that truly protect their residents and public health."...

WHYY PHILADELPHIA

Philly Council Hears Concerns Over Impact Of Pollutants In At-Risk Neighborhoods Philadelphia City Council held a hearing Wednesday on how environmental issues can disproportionately impact minority communities in at-risk neighborhoods in the city. Dr Walter Tsu of Philadelphia Physicians for Social Responsibility was among the speaker and specifically lamented a heat and power plant planned by SEPTA in Philadelphia that will run on methane gas. "In an era of climate change we need to require renewal energy such as wind, solar, hydroelectric and tidal as the first choice for energy production, and we should not allow a permit unless it can prove that renewable energy cannot satisfy the needs of the proposed power plant," he said. Councilman Derek Green spoke about recyclables in Philadelphia, saying they should not be incinerated no matter how contaminated they are. "I have a major concern that we are burning about 45 percent of our recycling product in violation of state law," he said. The hearing had no result, although council members are considering options...

BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

Frustrations continue at military meeting on PFAS cleanup Residents and officials expressed frustration with the speed of chemical clean-up at the former NAS-JRB Willow Grove at a meeting Wednesday. In theory, the quarterly meetings held by the military to update the public on cleanup operations at the former NAS-JRB Willow Grove are supposed to foster good relations with the community. Maybe next time. The latest meeting held Wednesday at the Horsham Township Library followed a similar trend from others in the recent past as residents, municipal leaders and elected officials peppered military representatives with questions and criticisms regarding ongoing PFAS chemical contamination at the former base, as well as the still active Horsham Air Guard Station. "I'm shocked. And frustrated," said an exasperated state Rep. Todd Stephens, R-151, of Horsham, at one point in the meeting. Stephens was joined by Horsham council President Greg Nesbitt, resident and activist Hope Grosse, and other audience members in criticizing the pace of the response. The PFAS issue blew open in 2014, when the chemicals were discovered in unsafe amounts in

local drinking water wells, after they were used for decades in firefighting foams. The scope of the problem has only grown in years since, eventually impacting about 15 public and more than 200 drinking water wells in the area, affecting the drinking water of some 70,000 people. Military representatives at the meeting detailed some steps they've taken toward trying to get a handle on the widespread environmental contamination. But during question and answer sessions, members of the public clearly weren't satisfied. "One of the uniform complaints of anybody in administration from any of the municipalities surrounded by the bases is the timing and pace of all of this. And we're frustrated, obviously," Nesbitt said. "Everybody in this room wants to see progress." ...

DOYLESTOWN INTELLIGENCER

U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick asks Gov. Wolf to halt Rockhill Quarry Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick has written a letter to Gov. Tom Wolf asking him to halt further "development" of the controversial quarry until more environmental assessments are completed. East Rockhill residents opposed to operations at the Rockhill Quarry have a potentially powerful new ally on their side: Bucks Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick, R-8, of Middletown, wrote a letter to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf Tuesday, requesting that "Any redevelopment of the Rockhill Quarry be suspended until a more thorough environmental review of the site can be conducted." Fitzpatrick noted the recent finding of asbestos at the quarry, and he wrote he "appreciates" the state Department of Environmental Protection ordering an immediate halt of quarrying activities until an investigation can be completed. However, Fitzpatrick expanded his concerns to those echoed by residential neighbors of the quarry, which is located in a wooded area north of the Pennridge Airport. "Unfortunately, the DEP approved the application despite objections from area residents concerned about air quality effects from dust emanation," Fitzpatrick wrote. "This is in addition to concerns regarding noise pollution and infrastructure deterioration due to increased traffic flow." Fitzpatrick referenced a second letter, sent to DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell on Nov. 5, which his office provided in a press release announcing his letter to Wolf. The earlier letter expanded on the additional concerns, claiming that DEP was aware noise off-site was louder in some areas than on-site. The letter to DEP also raised concerns about truck traffic, said that controls meant to limit dust emissions have been "known to fail," and posited that water consumption used for dust suppression could impact the aquifer in an area of known water contamination...

HARRISBURG PATRIOT NEWS

Pat Toomey: Farm Bill without tougher food stamp rules is a 'wasted opportunity U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., didn't have much in the way of kind words for a compromise federal Farm Bill that drops stricter work requirements for food stamp recipients, but legalizes industrial hemp, which is a big win for the emerging medical marijuana industry. The Senate voted 87-13 on Tuesday to approve the bill, crossing a major item off the Senate's to-do list, as Congress races to wrap up a busy lame duck session and tries to avert a government shutdown in an ongoing staring contest over President Donald Trump's border wall. The legislation, which still needs House approval, would spend an eye-watering \$867 billion over 10 years. The bill is "a wasted opportunity to rein in excessive spending and end corporate welfare. It makes no attempt to curb taxpayer-funded handouts or reform the broken sugar program that forces American consumers to pay twice as much for sugar as the rest of the world," Toomey said in a statement. "Further, efforts to establish a reasonable work requirement for adult, able-bodied food stamp recipients with no dependents, were abandoned. American farmers, consumers, and taxpayers deserved better," he added. Trump and U.S. House Republicans, including U.S. Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson, a Pennsylvania Republican who sits on the House Agriculture Committee, had been pushing for the stricter work requirements. In a PennLive op-Ed, Thompson argued that the work requirements were "antiquated and do not meet their intended purpose."...

STATE COLLEGE CENTRE DAILY TIMES

Penn State Investigating Ways To Conserve 365 Acres Near Toll Brothers Site Penn State announced Tuesday that it is "investigating ways to conserve" 365 acres of land that it owns between Whitehall Road and Rothrock State Forest at Musser Gap in Ferguson Township. "Our vision for this area is to not only help protect the local water supply, plant and animal species, but also make it a place where people can enjoy nature, learn about the environment and be inspired," Penn State President Eric Barron said in a press release. According to the release, Penn State is partnering with ClearWater Conservancy on the effort. ClearWater — a local nonprofit that's mission is to conserve and restore natural resources in central Pa. — will work with the community and gather input from local residents, the university release said...

WNEP TV SCRANTON /WILKES-BARRE

Sen. Yaw, State Agencies Tour Flood Areas In Lycoming County GAMBLE TOWNSHIP, Pa. -- In this very rainy year, flash flooding has devastated many parts of our area including north-central Pennsylvania. Lawmakers and state and local agencies took a tour of a community hard hit this past summer in Lycoming County. The tour on Wednesday was about getting these state and local agencies together to reignite discussion about preventing future flooding. State Senator Gene Yaw met with members of state agencies including the Department of Environmental Protection, PennDOT, and the Fish and Boat Commission, just outside of Montoursville...

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

Officials Discuss Proposed Leidy South Pipeline Project In Lycoming County BARBOURS — Pennsylvania General Energy Co.'s plans for a pipeline project in the Plunkett's Creek area of Loyalsock Creek drew plenty of questions, but in many cases, not a lot of specific answers at a public meeting Wednesday night. The company officials, along with those representing state agencies overseeing the project, discussed the plan with concerned residents who showed up at the Plunkett's Township Volunteer Fire Co. State Rep. Garth Everett, R-Muncy, made it clear to the gathering that the meeting was merely an informational session as the project remains in the preliminary stages. Plans call for PGE to install a water pipeline, pump station and natural gas gathering line to serve gas well pads in Lycoming County. The water pipeline, PGE officials noted, will preclude hauling water by truck and minimizing vehicle traffic. And, it is expected to eliminate an estimated 126,000 truckloads of water from area roads. Nathan Harris, PGE vice president for health, safety and the environment, said all efforts will be made to minimize impacts. He said the project calls for the construction of six water impoundments. Todd Eaby, manager of project review, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, noted his agency, as yet, has no specifics on PGE's plan. He said the commission will consider the project from different aspects. "There will be an aquatic resource survey," he said. "We will develop flow studies at the withdrawal site." Eaby said water withdrawals would be required to be recorded. Everett noted that PGE has purchased property on both sides of Loyalsock Creek just south of the area known as Best Beach. He said the company did similar work in the Pine Creek Valley several years ago. Responding to concerns about the location of water and gas lines, PGE officials noted that they would likely be placed five to 10 feet below the creek bed. The pump station, pumping water up to 24 hours a day, would create little to no noise for area landowners. Jordan Allison, chief of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's natural gas section, said his agency will consider the plan to ensure the waterway and habitat are not endangered or disturbed...

YORK DAILY RECORD

Rover, Mariner East 2 Pipelines Almost Finished, But At What Cost? In a race to build two of the largest natural gas pipelines in the world, projects stretching across Pennsylvania and Ohio have racked up over 800 state and federal violations — costing millions of dollars in fines and leaving state officials to scrutinize future projects. Energy Transfer's Rover and their subsidiary Sunoco's Mariner East 2 are expected to carry natural gas and gas liquids from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia — an area that would account for more than a third of U.S. gas production. But what's coming next? And what were all those violations about? Below is a breakdown of the pipeline projects by the numbers looking to answer some of those questions...

PA ENVIRONMENT DIGEST BLOG (By PA DEP)

EPA Names Dana Aunkst Director Of Chesapeake Bay Program On December 12, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the selection of former DEP Deputy Secretary Dana Aunkst as the new Director of EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program. "Dana has the leadership skills, experience and commitment we need to lead the Chesapeake Bay Office," said EPA Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio. "He has tremendous skill at building partnerships and creating a shared vision among geographically diverse stakeholders. His experience and relationships with multiple agencies will serve us and our partners well as we accelerate efforts to safeguard the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources." "This is a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners," said Dana Aunkst. "I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation's largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed."

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Virginia Gov. Northam proposes more money for a cleaner Chesapeake Bay RICHMOND — Gov. Ralph Northam on Wednesday called for “historic” investments in a cleaner Chesapeake Bay, proposing a five-year plan that he said would represent the largest investment ever in Virginia’s water quality. Northam (D) said his plan would help farmers as well as urban and suburban communities limit runoff that pollutes the bay, boost staff at the Department of Environmental Quality and add funding for land conservation. “There is no time like the present to take action to ensure the protection of Virginia’s natural resources, and these historic investments will ensure that the Commonwealth honors its commitments to improve water quality and to protect the progress we’ve made on restoring the Chesapeake Bay,” Northam said in a statement. The measures, which Northam will formally propose Tuesday in a speech to the General Assembly’s money committees, drew praise from environmentalists, who helped bankroll his 2017 bid for governor but have been bitterly disappointed by his handling of two natural gas pipelines being built in the state. There was no sign that the governor’s bay cleanup plan would soften their take on the pipelines. “I think our stance all along has been to kind of decouple those things, recognize progress when there’s progress,” said Lee Francis, deputy director of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters. “There’s going to be areas where we disagree.” ...

Air Pollution: EPA advisory panel gets earful at public hearing An embattled EPA advisory committee held a public hearing in Washington today, with members getting two broad strains of feedback. The first came from industry representatives who repeatedly questioned whether a draft EPA research roundup overstates the health risks posed by airborne particulates. The second came mainly from scientists who charged the advisory panel lacks the breadth of know-how needed to review the adequacy of the existing particulate matter pollution standards. “Today you should ask yourselves, ‘Do we have the necessary expertise in all of those critical scientific disciplines to do this review,’” Chris Frey told the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC). “And clearly the answer is no.” Frey, a North Carolina State University environmental engineering professor, was on an auxiliary scientific panel that was assisting in the review before acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler summarily disbanded it two months ago. In a letter this week, Frey and 14 other former members urged that the panel be revived. They also called on the seven-member CASAC to reject the accelerated timetable imposed by EPA earlier this year that calls for the review’s completion by late 2020. If Frey was strikingly blunt, his concerns were echoed in varying degrees by about half of more than two dozen speakers at the session, the start of a two-day CASAC public meeting. Without an adequate review, “the end result may be particulate matter standards that insufficiently protect the United States public, especially our most susceptible populations such as children and the elderly,” said Fernando Garcia Menendez, another N.C. State professor, in reading a statement signed by more than 200 scientists and engineers...

The Energy 202 Blog: Why 2020 candidates will be talking a lot more about climate change The next presidential election is nearly two years away. But it’s already clear that climate change will be a higher-profile issue in the 2020 race than it was in the previous presidential contest. That’s not exactly a high bar to hurdle. As climate activists like to point out, global warming was barely mentioned once in the three debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. But a confluence of factors, including new veins of science and activism over the past year, make it more likely Democratic candidates for president will pay heightened attention to the issue. Here are a few reasons why.

— U.S. withdrawal from the Paris accord will loom over Election Day: President Trump promised last year to withdraw that United States from the landmark international accord for nations to voluntarily rein in greenhouse gas emissions. But that agreement is structured so that the earliest Trump could withdraw the nation from the accord is Nov. 4, 2020. -- That happens to be one day after the 2020 election.

If Trump hews to his commitment to withdraw from the Paris accord, that deadline will hang over the presidential race and become fodder for the eventual Democratic nominee, who will likely counter Trump by promising to keep the United States inside the agreement. Many potential presidential contenders are already doing just that. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) called Trump’s decision to leave the Paris accord a “retreat.” Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) called it “a vicious blow to American leadership.” Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) said it was “catastrophic for our future.” ...

Climate: Some details emerge about select committee Next year's likely House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) huddled with incoming committee chairs this morning to pitch them on a climate change select panel after weeks of bickering over the issue in the Democratic caucus. Most details are still being finalized, but two lawmakers who were at the meeting said she proposed a select panel with 15 members and little, if any, legislative power. Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.) said that he's "comfortable" with the proposal and that it would not affect his work next year when he is chairing the Natural Resources Committee. "I think coordination is going to be the biggest issue," Grijalva said. "Whatever happens to the select committee, the work of other committees of jurisdiction are not put on hold." The issue has been a flashpoint for the caucus since the midterm election. Pelosi first proposed reviving the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, which was led by then-Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) the last time Democrats controlled the House, ahead of the election...

DELAWARE

DELAWARE PUBLIC MEDIA (NPR)

Farm Bill passes Congress with expanded safety net programs for Delaware farmers The 2018 Farm Bill is heading to the president for his signature after both chambers of Congress passed a compromise version this week. It provides nearly \$870 billion for items ranging from low-income food assistance and rural broadband access to organic research. The compromise rejected attempts to add stricter work requirements for people getting food assistance, a controversial proposal by House Republicans. Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester says she's happy the Farm Bill leaves out the House Republicans' plan to increase work requirements on SNAP recipients since the majority of them already work. "All of us, especially myself as former Secretary of Labor, want to see people work," she said. "I mean, we have 7 million unfilled jobs. But we also want to do it in a way that is smart and is funded appropriately." The bill expands insurance to cover new crops, expands farm subsidies and gives greater supports for dairy producers. Blunt Rochester said it's important for Congress to expand safety net programs for farmers in Delaware and across the country because of trade uncertainty. "Our farmers are hurting," she said. "You know, particularly in Delaware when we even look at our soybean farmers. The impact of what the president does in China has an impact right here at home." The legislation also brings additional money for Chesapeake Bay conservation and 40 million dollars in new scholarship funding to Historically Black Universities like Delaware State University.

Environmental advocate responds to proposed slag grinding facility An clean air advocate has some concerns about the slag grinding facility proposed for near the Port of Wilmington. Walan Specialty Construction Products hopes to build a slag grinding facility near the Port of Wilmington which would produce a powdered cement additive. Russell Zerbo of the Clean Air Council, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit that advocates for public health, says the proposed facility would bring New Castle County close to failing federal standards for PM2.5, or fine particulate matter. "If another company comes in [later] that is a third of [Walan's] proposed size, it would likely go above the standard that's already not in attainment." He says the County is currently a "maintenance" region for PM2.5, which is harmful to respiratory and cardiovascular health. The County is already in non-attainment for the 2015 8-hour ozone standard—a problem Zerbo says the proposed facility would contribute to. According to Walan, the proposed facility is expected to emit nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, which contribute to ground-level ozone. It is also expected to emit sulfur oxides carbon monoxide, along with the various sizes of particulate matter. Zerbo is also concerned about the location of the proposed operation. It sits along the Christina River, beside I-495 and just outside of the protected Coastal Zone. However, the area of the Coastal Zone the site is adjacent to is one of the fourteen areas of Delaware's protected Coastal Zone where heavy industry is grandfathered in. Zerbo calls the nearby Southbridge neighborhood an "environmental justice area." "It's easy to imagine that they should get some extra Coastal Zone protections. Because it's been well documented how easily that area floods. And then you're combining that with a history of industrial contamination," he said. Zerbo has submitted a comment to DNREC requesting the 501 Christina Ave. site be included in the Coastal Zone and entitled to its protections. Walan's environmental consultant, Rick Beringer of Duffield Associates, counters that the proposed operation would be classified as "manufacturing" rather than heavy industry, and would still be allowed if it were within a protected Coastal Zone. Beringer says activity on the site would not contribute to flooding in the nearby neighborhood. "This site has absolutely nothing to do with the flooding that occurs at Southbridge."...

Pennsylvania mushroom farmer to head Delaware Farm Bureau The Delaware Farm Bureau is tapping Pennsylvania mushroom farmer Joseph Poppiti to head the organization. Poppiti grew up in Delaware. He studied horticulture at Penn State, owned a landscaping firm and now grows specialty mushrooms with more than 300 employees and an \$18 million budget. He also has experience writing state and federal grants. Poppiti says he's glad to be back working in the First State. "I've been involved in farming all my life, and I've been around the Delaware, Delmarva area all my life working with farmers," said Poppiti. "So it was kind of a natural fit to come back and take on this responsibility." Poppiti adds through the mushroom industry he's been working with First State farmers for years. Now, he's looking forward to working with the state of Delaware on their behalf...

DELAWARE BUSINESS NOW

Land & Litter Challenge seeks solutions to poultry waste issues The Delmarva Land & Litter Challenge (DLLC) – a partnership effort between members of the poultry industry, environmental advocates and regulators – is inviting stakeholders to discuss beneficial uses of poultry litter. This group seeks to develop "consensus-driven solutions that support sustainable and profitable agriculture and healthy local waterways." DLLC invited a wide range of representatives to meet with them at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Wachapreague Lab on November 19. The main discussion topic centered around new ideas for the transportation of poultry litter and moving litter from poultry houses to farms that want it. Poultry manure (also known as "litter") is a organic fertilizer that includes phosphorus, nitrogen, calcium and other micronutrients and elements that promote plant growth and soil health. Commercial fertilizer is becoming increasingly expensive and does not offer the same long-term benefit to crop production. Although poultry litter is abundantly available in some areas, many crop farmers around the Chesapeake Bay region have a difficult time getting this commodity...

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL

Commentary: Cosmo Servidio: Reeling back massive federal overreach Upon taking office, President Donald Trump initiated a process to review and replace unnecessary regulatory barriers to job creation and economic growth, which included the Obama Administration's 2015 definition of "waters of the United States." This week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Army are delivering on the president's agenda by proposing a new definition for "waters of the United States." The proposal would end years of uncertainty over where federal jurisdiction begins and ends. It would clarify the role of our state and tribal partners — and help them more effectively and efficiently manage their land and water resources. And, it would not exceed the limited powers that the federal government has been given under the Constitution and the Clean Water Act to regulate navigable waters. While excessive federal regulations often delay or prohibit American businesses from investing in infrastructure or land development projects that will create jobs, grow crops and improve how we manage our natural resources — our new proposal would facilitate critical infrastructure projects, reduce barriers to business development, and support economic growth by making it easier to understand where the Clean Water Act applies — and where it does not. Under the 2015 definition, farmers, landowners, municipalities, and businesses are spending too much time and money trying to determine whether waters on their land are "waters of the United States" and therefore subject to federal regulation under the Clean Water Act. Under the proposal, traditional navigable waters, tributaries, certain lakes and ponds, impoundments of jurisdictional waters, wetlands adjacent to jurisdictional waters, and certain ditches, such as those used for navigation or affected by the tide, would be federally regulated... Since the beginning of this administration, EPA and the Army have been committed to an open and transparent process for reviewing the definition of "waters of the United States" and the scope of federal authority under the Clean Water Act. The agencies sought feedback from a broad variety of stakeholders and have developed a proposed rule that reflects the diverse input that was submitted. The agencies' proposal is now open for public review for 60 days after the rule is published in the Federal Register. Trump understands that we can have clean air, clean water and a

strong economy. By providing greater certainty to states and the regulated community, our proposed definition will streamline and accelerate important projects throughout the nation while continuing to protect our nation's waters. This means that farmers and other hardworking Americans will spend less time and money determining whether they need a federal permit and more time growing crops, building homes, modernizing infrastructure, creating jobs and improving the lives of their fellow citizens.

WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Manchin To Take Top Spot on Senate Energy Committee Senator Joe Manchin will become the Democrats' top member on the Senate committee devoted to energy issues. In a news release Tuesday, the lawmaker said he was "excited" by the opportunity to serve as Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. "West Virginia is a leading energy producer and major contributor to advanced energy technologies, and I intend to ensure this progress is continued," he said. "The problems facing our country are serious, and I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find common sense solutions for long-term comprehensive energy policy that incorporates an all-of-the-above strategy and ensures our state and our nation are leaders in the energy future." Manchin's ascension to top Democrat on the Senate energy committee gives the lawmaker a prominent platform to shape environmental policy. The committee covers a wide range of issues including public lands, the electricity grid, energy technology and policies that affect nuclear, coal, natural gas and renewable energies; Manchin will help set priorities and hearings for the legislative body. The appointment has drawn criticism from some environmental groups and some fellow Democrats who worry Manchin may not be progressive enough on climate change and the transition away from fossil fuels. Manchin has served as a member on the committee since 2010. He is replacing Sen. Maria Cantwell, a Democrat from Oregon, who will become the top Democrat on the Commerce Committee.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

Update: 3 Found Alive Inside West Virginia Coal Mine Three people missing since last weekend were found alive Wednesday in an underground coal mine in West Virginia, authorities said. The three were located Wednesday inside Elk Run Coal's Rock House Powellton mine near Clear Creek, the state Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training said in a statement. The mine was described as nonoperational...

West Virginia's Manchin gains key role on energy panel WASHINGTON (AP) — West Virginia's Joe Manchin will become the Democrats' top member on the Senate energy committee, giving the coal-state lawmaker a prominent position to shape policy. Manchin's prospective ascension to the top Democratic spot on the energy panel had sparked the ire of some environmentalists, who warned that he wasn't supportive enough of clean energy to win the post. Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee of Washington, a potential candidate for the party's 2020 presidential nomination, launched a petition drive last week warning that Manchin "simply can't be trusted to make the bold, progressive decisions we need" from the energy committee's senior Democrat. After Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., announced his promotion Tuesday, Manchin said in a statement that he is "excited for the opportunity to continue to serve West Virginians in this new role." "The problems facing our country are serious, and I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find common sense solutions for long-term comprehensive energy policy that incorporates an all-of-the-above strategy and ensures our state and our nation are leaders in the energy future." Erich Pica, president of the environmental group Friends of the Earth, said in a statement that "Joe Manchin's appointment as ranking member of the Senate Energy Committee is a stark failure of Chuck Schumer's leadership." Manchin will take the Democrats' top spot on the committee because Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington is moving to become the top Democrat on the Commerce Committee. Sens. Bernie Sanders, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan could have leapfrogged over Manchin but chose not to leave their top spots on the Budget and Agriculture committees, respectively. Senate Democrats will remain the minority next year, with the GOP holding a 53-seat majority. Manchin was elected to another six-year term in November, defeating Republican Patrick Morrissey. The coal industry spent heavily in support of Morrissey's campaign.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

EPA names Pennsylvania environmental official Dana Aunkst as Director of Chesapeake Bay Program Pennsylvania environmental official Dana Aunkst will serve as the next director of the federal Chesapeake Bay Program, based in Annapolis. The Environmental Protection Agency announced his appointment Wednesday. Aunkst replaces Nick DiPasquale, who retired from the helm of the bay program a year ago. The 30-year-old, \$73 million federal-state partnership coordinates efforts to reduce pollution across the Chesapeake watershed. Aunkst has worked in the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection since 2002, serving as a deputy secretary and acting secretary. He directed six regional offices and 2,000 staff carrying out environmental regulation, EPA officials said. He oversaw programs focused on water and groundwater quality, soil conservation, public water supply withdrawals, sewage facilities planning, sewage and industrial discharges, and flood protection, they said. As Pennsylvania has lagged in efforts to meet Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals, Aunkst authored a "reboot strategy" report in 2016. Cosmo Servidio, administrator of the EPA region that includes both Pennsylvania and Maryland, praised Aunkst's leadership and experience. "He has tremendous skill at building partnerships and creating a shared vision among geographically diverse stakeholders," Servidio said in a statement. "His experience and relationships with multiple agencies will serve us and our partners well as we accelerate efforts to safeguard the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources." Aunkst called the new role "a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners." "I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation's largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed," he said in a statement.

Commentary: Restoring the Chesapeake Bay: a decades-old bipartisan effort Over the past two years, I have been asked the same question over and over again: "How are we able to continue to fund the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort in the current political climate?" This question has merit, since President Donald Trump's first proposed budget completely eliminated the \$73 million in funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Chesapeake Bay Program and other critical federal agency support. However, for the past two years, much to the surprise of many, we have been able to maintain the effort because the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams has always crossed political boundaries. Since its very inception, restoring the Chesapeake has been a bipartisan effort, starting in 1973 with Sen. Charles "Mac" Mathias. A Republican from Maryland, Mathias heard various complaints and reports of an ailing Chesapeake and took it upon himself to travel its waters to see the damage firsthand. The result of that trip was a congressionally funded five-year study, to be led by a relatively new federal agency — the EPA. While that study took place, state and federal leaders worked to create a body that would manage and oversee this massive restoration effort. In 1983, representatives from Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, the EPA and the Chesapeake Bay Commission convened to sign the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement and established what is known as the Chesapeake Bay Program. This month marks the 35th anniversary of that agreement, signed by three Democratic and two Republican officials, including William Ruckelshaus, who was appointed as the first administrator for EPA by President Nixon and brought back by President Reagan. The other watershed states (West Virginia, New York and Delaware) have since signed on to subsequent Chesapeake Bay agreements, which have set goals for everything from nutrient pollution to crab populations and have helped to hold the states accountable. The creation of the Chesapeake Bay Program brought with it something else: much needed federal funding...

WJZ- CBS BALTIMORE

New Farm Bill Will Fund Initiatives To Keep Chesapeake Bay Healthy (video link) According to Chesapeake Bay Foundation Scientist Dr. Beth McGee, "the majority of pollution coming into the bay is coming from agriculture, and one of the large funding sources to help reduce that pollution is through the federal farm bill."

WBOC-TV SALISBURY/DELMARVA

Crews Cleanup Chesapeake Bay Debris Following Record Rainfall KENT ISLAND, Md. - Earlier this Summer, flooding in areas up north has brought tons of freshwater and debris down through the Susquehanna River. The debris passes through the Conowingo Dam and ends up in the Chesapeake Bay. Most of the debris consists of large tree trunks and limbs. Now, Maryland's Department of Natural Resources says a lot has been cleared in the upper Bay, but four months later, the cleanup continues. In total, officials say they've picked up more than 150,000 pounds of debris since cleanup started. A lot of that debris ends up along shorelines. If not cleared and thrown away properly, Maryland DNR says

boater safety could be at risk. On Wednesday morning, Natural Resources Manager Chris Ruark drove his work boat closer to shore, while his teammates, Matt O'Neal and Aaron Nelson, stood ready with a crane and tong in tow. As the boat nears shore, the men get to work, sawing and taking apart large tree trunks and bringing them aboard. Ruark says it's slow, steady work they've been chipping away on and off for months. "With the crane movement and and cutting pieces of wood...it's just a lot to be very safe," Ruark said. The crew says the work is nothing new, but record rainfall from states up north has brought an unexpected amount this year. "It seems like every time we go some place, there's something new," Nelson said. "Probably one of the worst ones that that I've seen in a long time." The boat can only take up 7,000 pounds at a time. After more than an hour of hauling, it means Ruark and his team can head home. Ruark says, though they've made progress, the cleanup effort in the Chesapeake Bay will likely continue well into next year.

CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL

EPA names new leader for Chesapeake Bay Program Office The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday announced that it had selected a longtime Pennsylvania environmental official to head its Chesapeake Bay Program Office. EPA Region III Administrator Cosmo Servidio named Dana Aunkst, who has held a number of positions with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection over the years and authored its Chesapeake Bay "reboot strategy to oversee the office which coordinates state and federal Bay restoration efforts. "He has tremendous skill at building partnerships and creating a shared vision among geographically diverse stakeholders," Servidio said. "His experience and relationships with multiple agencies will serve us and our partners well as we accelerate efforts to safeguard the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources." Aunkst has worked for 33 years on environmental programs in private industry as well as local and state government. Since 2002, he has worked at the Pennsylvania DEP where he has served in a number of positions, including deputy secretary and acting secretary. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners," Aunkst said. "I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation's largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed." He also served as deputy secretary for field operations, overseeing six offices in implementing the full array of state and federal regulatory programs. As executive deputy secretary of operations he oversaw the activities of more than 2,000 professional and technical staff engaged in all aspects of environmental protection. As deputy secretary of water, he oversaw programs for surface and groundwater quality; soil and water conservation; public water withdrawals; sewer facilities planning; and industrial discharges. In that job, he also led efforts in 2016 to write the strategy to reboot the state's Chesapeake Bay cleanup efforts after it had fallen far behind and faced potential action from the EPA. Since then, the agency has been working to implement that strategy. "Dana is a results- and data-driven manager of environmental programs and will be a good fit with the professional staff at EPA," said David E. Hess, former DEP secretary. "Pennsylvania is the linchpin to meeting Chesapeake Bay Watershed cleanup goals, and he knows our state well. The challenge will be to dedicate enough federal and Pennsylvania resources to the program to accomplish those goals." Aunkst's appointment comes at a key time, as one Bay Program challenge in coming years will be working with Pennsylvania to accelerated cleanup efforts — the state contributes more water-fouling nutrients to the Chesapeake than any other jurisdiction, but is far behind in its share of the cleanup effort...

Feds announce proposal to rollback protections for some waterways and wetlands The Trump administration announced plans Tuesday to severely restrict the types of streams, wetlands and other waterways that would be protected by federal regulation from development or disturbance. Though welcomed by farmers and developers, the announcement drew intense criticism from environmentalists. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers jointly unveiled a proposed new definition of "waters of the United States" that would withdraw federal oversight of streams that only flow after it rains and of wetlands that are not physically connected to waterways. Acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the proposal would take the place of a more expansive definition of federally protected waters, adopted by the Obama administration in 2015, which has drawn the ire of landowners wishing to develop or farm their property. He said the new definition "puts an end to the previous administration's power grab." "For the first time, we are clearly defining the difference between federally protected waterways and state protected waterways," Wheeler said in a statement. "Our simpler and clearer definition would help landowners understand whether a project on their property will require a federal permit or not without spending thousands of dollars on engineering and legal professionals." The proposal is the first step of a lengthy rule-making process and, if the rule is finalized, it would likely be challenged in court. The new definition would provide federal protection for six types of waterways, including navigable rivers and their tributaries, lakes and ponds, as well as wetlands that are clearly connected to flowing water. It would cover streams that dry up at times, as long as they flow at some point in a typical

year....

Commentary: This 'half measure' might be enough to save Bay for next generation Eighteen million people call the Bay watershed home. That means we have 18 million reasons to protect this landscape and, incidentally, we will have an additional 4 million reasons by 2050. If we don't increase our focus on protecting and restoring the Chesapeake, our children and grandchildren won't experience the same Bay that we do today — full of wildlife, history and wonder. The World Wildlife Fund recently released a startling report that said, on average, we have seen a 60 percent decline in the world's mammal, bird, fish, reptile and amphibian populations since 1970. That means over the course of two generations, we have seen more than half the world's wildlife disappear. If I am honest with myself, I am not surprised that the numbers are as high as they are. I have witnessed firsthand the impact that deforestation has in all of the various places I have lived throughout my 41 years — New England, the Pacific Northwest, Central and South America, and most recently, the Chesapeake. The WWF's findings simply add up all of the habitat loss and land use changes into one solid statistic. Globally, it is clear that our natural assets can no longer be taken for granted. Closer to home, we must take action to make sure that the Chesapeake remains a thriving ecosystem for generations. We would want Rachel Carson to confirm to our grandchildren that spring is just as boisterous as we remember it being as children...

St. Mary's County, MD, issues moratorium on use of commercial docks for new aquaculture leases Responding to complaints from waterfront homeowners, officials in St. Mary's County, MD, voted Tuesday to impose a six-month moratorium on using commercial docks to work any new state-issued aquaculture leases that would raise oysters in cages or floats. With just three of its five members present, the Southern Maryland county's board of commissioners adopted the moratorium by a vote of 2–1, after shortening its duration from 18 months to 180 days. One member was absent, while another recused himself from the session because he owns a waterfront home and has objected to an aquaculture lease applied for off his shoreline. The county's action drew criticism from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and from a local oyster farmer, who noted that watermen have increasingly turned to aquaculture as an alternative or supplement to fickle wild harvests. "Right at the time when watermen need a real option, we're about to make it harder for them," said J.D. Blackwell, owner of 38North Oysters in St. Mary's County. St. Mary's has been one of Maryland's hotbeds for oyster farming since the state moved in 2010 to expand aquaculture. There have been 99 leases issued there, covering nearly 900 acres of water. About one-fourth of those leases authorize the use of cages on the bottom or floats on the surface, while the rest only permit growing oysters on loose shell on the bottom, much as they do in the wild...

Spotted lanternfly, a dire threat to crops, shows up in MD The spotted lanternfly, an exotic insect that feeds like a vampire on the sap of fruit orchards and hardwood trees, has been detected for the first time in Maryland, setting off alarm bells in the agricultural industry. The Maryland Department of Agriculture announced Oct. 25 that it had found a single adult specimen in a trap in the northeastern corner of Cecil County, at the northern end of the Bay. The county borders Pennsylvania and Delaware, two states where lanternflies had previously been discovered. Maryland officials said they are moving to stop the invasion in its tracks. "It's something we're looking to do our best to keep our eye on," said Kim Rice, program manager for plant protection and weed management. "If we can eradicate it, we're certainly going to try."...

WATER ONLINE.COM

EPA Names Dana Aunkst Director Of Chesapeake Bay Program Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the selection of Dana Aunkst as the new Director of EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program. "Dana has the leadership skills, experience and commitment we need to lead the Chesapeake Bay Office," said EPA Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio. "He has tremendous skill at building partnerships and creating a shared vision among geographically diverse stakeholders. His experience and relationships with multiple agencies will serve us and our partners well as we accelerate efforts to safeguard the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources." "This is a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners," said Dana Aunkst. "I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation's largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed." Aunkst has extensive environmental and regulatory experience working 33 years in private industry and local and state government. During his tenure at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) which began in 2002, Aunkst served in executive level positions as Deputy Secretary and Acting Secretary. As the Deputy Secretary for Field Operations, he directed the operations of six regional offices in

implementing the full array of state and federal environmental regulations. As Executive Deputy Secretary for Programs, Aunkst directed the activities of more than 2,000 professional and technical staff engaged in all aspects of environmental protection. While serving as Deputy Secretary for Water, he oversaw programs for surface and groundwater quality, soil and water conservation, public water supply withdrawals, sewage facilities planning, point source sewage and industrial discharges, flood protection and stream improvements. In this position, Aunkst led the change to resuscitate Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay restoration effort by authoring the 2016 Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Reboot Strategy. Aunkst holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from Penn State University and is a licensed professional engineer in Pennsylvania. His appointment will be effective December 23, 2018. .

SOUTHERN MARYLAND NEWS

2018 sets new high in rainfall to become wettest year on record As 2018 approaches its final days, it is officially marked as the wettest year on record, at least for the past 124 years, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The record-breaking amount of rain this year presented serious challenges for communities like farmers and waterfront towns like North Beach. While "fresh water coming out of the sky don't hurt," as one local waterman puts it, the fishermen whose livelihoods rely on the rivers also had their businesses suspended when debris flowed into Chesapeake Bay waters after rain-induced flooding in July forced the Conowingo Dam to open. As far as the number goes, this year was an unusual year. On average, local weather watchers in St. Mary's County said the county received about 43 inches of rain. The amount of rain varies not only from county to county, but from one end to the other end of the county. But in general, the trend is the same. The numbers recorded by local weather watchers this year so far have ranged from the mid 50s to the mid 70s, not counting last weekend's snowfall. Ridge, for example, saw a record-breaking 68 inches of rain as of early December, according to weather watcher John Zyla. Zyla said the previous record was 88 inches in 1872, an unheard-of amount of rain recorded in St. Inigoes. "Since 1872, there were five years where we got above 60 inches," Zyla said Monday. "It doesn't happen very often." North Beach, a waterfront community in northern Calvert, saw a whopping 68 inches of rain as of late November, according to the town's own measurement. This year saw the highest amount of rain not only as a whole, but also in individual months. In Calvert, for example, the months of May and November set new single-month records, according to NOAA's database that dates back to 1895. For farmers, that record-breaking rain only made things more difficult. Joe-Sam Swann, who runs a sixth-generation farm in Owings, estimated his farm lost more than half a year's revenue because of the rain. "Growing in a wet year is very tough," he said by phone last week. "Growing in a [record-breaking] wet year, that is tougher."...

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.)

Farm bill makes more funds available for Chesapeake Bay ANNAPOLIS (AP) — A Maryland senator says the federal farm bill makes more money available to help the Chesapeake Bay. Sen. Chris Van Hollen said Tuesday the measure includes parts of his Chesapeake Bay Farm Bill Enhancements Act. The measure contains \$300 million for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program each year. It provides funding to conservation groups and farmers to work together to cut pollution and improve water quality. It was created in 2014 to prioritize conservation resources that once were handled in separate conservation programs. The percentage of funding for critical conservation areas like the bay will rise from 35 percent to 50 percent. The measure brings \$50 million more a year to the program for Maryland and other states that participate. Lawmakers have reached a final agreement on the bill.

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Coal ash debate continues: Should it be buried or hauled away? DUMFRIES — Legislation to address 27 million cubic yards of toxic coal ash stored underground across Virginia could include a prohibition on burying in place any coal ash, said Sen. Scott Surovell, D-Fairfax, one of the leading legislators working on the issue. "We're not going to leave this stuff where it is, in these old clay-lined, partially lined ponds and put a really thick rubber thing on it... We're not going to do that," Surovell said. "We're either going to recycle or clean close — dig it up all the way." Surovell was speaking before a

crowd of 50 people at a town hall at Dumfries Elementary near Dominion Energy's Possum Point Power Station. His comments clashed with those of Dominion Energy's Director of Environmental Services Jason E. Williams, who said a "hybrid" approach that includes some burial of coal ash is "what's likely an ideal path forward." The heated public event saw residents push for the ash to be removed from the giant ponds where it is stored, alleging pollution to nearby waterways and private wells. Dominion Energy representatives, meanwhile, defended the managing of the ponds, denying any contamination. Coal ash, a byproduct of burning coal, contains heavy metals including arsenic and mercury. The town hall is the third since Dominion released a report last month, at the urging of state lawmakers, saying it would cost ratepayers across the state roughly \$5.7 million to excavate and recycle just under half the ash stored in the state. The event was hosted by Surovell and Delegates Jennifer Carroll Foy, D-Woodbridge, and Luke Torian, D-Prince William...

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN PILOT

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam proposes millions to help farmers and cities stop bay pollution VIRGINIA BEACH -- Virginia's governor wants to use some of the surplus revenue expected next year to prevent polluted water runoff around farms and urban areas. Gov. Ralph Northam made the announcement Wednesday in the sustainable Brock Environmental Center, which serves as the offices for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. He proposed dedicating \$90 million each year starting in fiscal 2020 to a cost-sharing program to help farmers make their properties more environmentally friendly and a one-time \$50 million deposit into the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund. The plans require General Assembly approval. The cost-share program is designed to help farmers repair dams, fence cattle out of streams and preserve wetlands. The Stormwater Local Assistance Fund provides cities and counties that include urban areas with matching grants to manage the quality of water running off roads, parking lots and sidewalks. The fund was created in 2013. The projects help filter stormwater naturally into the ground instead of hitting impervious surfaces, running off into local waterways and taking pollution with it into the bay. "A lot of communities are having to step up already and put stormwater fees in people's water bills and create special tax districts and other ways to come up with money to do this," Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler said after the governor's announcement. "Our proposal is for Virginia, the Commonwealth, to put some skin in the game as well to match what the localities are doing and make it more of a partnership."...

Dominion offers 'performance guarantee' to protect ratepayers in solar projects for Facebook

VIRGINIA MERCURY

Proposed rollback of federal water protection rules would leave wetlands along Chesapeake Bay at risk, report says President Donald Trump's administration's proposed rollbacks to federal clean water regulations would strip some wetlands, as well as headwater streams, in Virginia of federal protections and leave them vulnerable to pollution and real estate development, a report says. The new rules would redefine which "waters of the U.S." are protected under the Clean Water Act and proposes removing isolated wetlands that are not connected to waterways large enough for vessels like boats and ships to pass. That would revoke protections for the "Delmarva Potholes," about 54 square miles, or 34,000 acres, of wetlands on the Delmarva Peninsula, which is part of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, according to a new report from the Environmental Integrity Project. The wetlands are important to the Chesapeake Bay because they filter pollutants, such as farm runoff, out of the bay. State protections, according to the Environmental Integrity Project, aren't as strong as the combination of state and federal oversight that currently exists. "Clean water is a right, not a luxury," said Lisa Feldt, vice president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, in a statement. "Now is not the time for the federal government to weaken efforts to reduce pollution." According to the report, Virginia is one of 13 states with laws that prohibit its own wetland rules from being more restrictive than federal regulations. "That means that a rollback of the federal wetlands regulations would, by definition, mean a rollback of state wetlands protections, too," the report states... The proposed rule changes would also leave thousands of miles of streams at risk, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has suggested removing ephemeral streams — those that flow only after rain or snowfall — as a protected category. Such a move would create unnecessary confusion about which streams enjoy protections and which don't, the group asserts, "and leave an unknown number of streams unprotected." "In the Chesapeake region, streams and tributaries in the upper reaches of the Susquehanna, Potomac, Shenandoah, James and many other rivers, as well as a huge number of wetlands, would not receive protections under the Trump administration's heartless scheme to repeal the Clean Water Rule," Betsy Nichols, executive director of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, said a statement.

Commentary: Environmental groups find something to cheer about from the Northam administration For much of his first year in office, Gov. Ralph Northam has gotten himself crosswise with the environmental groups that were big backers of his 2017 campaign. The relationship has steadily devolved — from the reappointment of Department of Environmental Quality Director David Paylor in the spring to the governor’s steadfast determination to do as little as possible about a pair of contentious pipeline projects over the summer — before flaring into very public acrimony last month. That’s when Northam yanked two members off the State Air Pollution Control Board air board and has had trouble explaining it as anything but an attempt to guard against the defeat of a permit Dominion Energy needs for a compressor station, part of its Atlantic Coast Pipeline. But eager to find something nice to say about Northam, environmental groups cheered his announcement Wednesday that he would seek what his office called “the largest investment in water quality needs in the history of the commonwealth and the largest dedication of consistent clean water funding ever.” The governor proposes dedicating \$90 million per year by the 2020 fiscal year to the agricultural best management practices cost share program, which helps the farmers who are a significant source of nutrient and sediment pollution that winds up in the Chesapeake Bay implement a suite of projects, from fencing cattle out of streams to planting buffers along waterways, carefully managing fertilizer and planting cover crops to reduce erosion, among others. “This year’s funding is approximately \$30 million,” Ofirah Yheskel, the governor’s spokeswoman, said. “The needs are determined by an advisory group of farm and conservation stakeholders, and they have determined the annual need to be \$90 million. It’s my understanding that historically, the program’s funding has varied year to year, sometimes going totally unmet.”

Commentary: Former water board member: Lawsuit over pipeline violations is also an indictment of DEQ’s regulatory approach After months of citizen complaints about deleterious impacts to waters of the commonwealth from Mountain Valley Pipeline construction, many cheered when Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring announced that an enforcement action had been filed last week. Upon closer inspection, however, the complaint filed by Herring is as much a critique of Department of Environmental Quality Director David Paylor’s program to prevent the degradation of state waters as it is a catalog of violations of state laws designed to protect water quality. In spite of concerns raised by tens of thousands of citizens last year, the State Water Control Board, on the recommendation and testimony of the DEQ staff, issued a water quality certification that was based on a “reasonable assurance” that the waters of the commonwealth would not be degraded by the upland construction of the pipeline. As a member of the water board at that time, I voted against the certification because there were significant unresolved questions as to whether the construction through steep slopes and karst topography could be completed without impacts to water quality. There were also questions about whether erosion and sediment control plans were sufficient to address significant rain events and saturated soil conditions. Along with promising the best and most stringent stormwater management and sediment control from a technical standpoint, DEQ also promised that in the event that weather situations changed and rapid adjustments needed to be made, the agency had the full authority to direct additional stormwater management measures as well as to issue a stop work order to prevent imminent degradation of the commonwealth’s surface water resources...

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS

Servidio OpEd: Health risks connected to chemicals in groundwater As someone who has lived in the Mid-Atlantic region for many years, I am fully aware and proud of the important role our region has played in the development of American culture, commerce, industry, and environmental stewardship throughout the years. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is a group of man-made chemicals that include PFOA and PFOS. Since the 1940s, PFAS has been manufactured and used in a variety of everyday products from firefighting foam to food packaging. Today, some of our communities are facing a unique problem because PFAS have been detected in their groundwater and drinking water raising concerns about health risks. Rest assured that PFAS is a national priority. At the National Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. in May, EPA announced the following additional actions: ... As a follow-up to the national summit, EPA is visiting communities impacted by PFAS to further engage on ways EPA can best support the work being done at the state and local levels. In addition, we want to ensure the input received at these regional events help shape our path forward. Using information from the summit, community engagements, and public input in the docket, EPA plans to develop a PFAS Management Plan for release later this year. The next EPA community engagement meeting is scheduled to take place on July 25 in Horsham, Pa. at the Hatboro-Horsham High School. (Details concerning a meeting in North Carolina are still being finalized.) Just as our region has played an active role in shaping our country’s history, our citizens

continue to be a key voice on national issues. I encourage you to attend this upcoming meeting and provide input. If you're unable to attend in person, you can submit written comments. I look forward to hearing from you. For more information about PFAS and any upcoming meetings, visit: epa.gov/pfas.

CBS 19 CHARLOTTESVILLE

Northam's proposed budget includes more investments in natural resources RICHMOND, Va. (CBS19 NEWS) -- A proposed major investment in the protection of natural resources would accelerate Virginia toward its 2025 targets for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. Governor Ralph Northam announced the investment Wednesday as part of his proposed budget. "There is no time like the present to take action to ensure the protection of Virginia's natural resources, and these historic investments will ensure that the Commonwealth honors its commitments to improve water quality and to protect the progress we've made on restoring the Chesapeake Bay," he said. "We have a unique opportunity with this budget to make investments that will yield benefits for generations of Virginians to come and I look forward to working with the General Assembly on this front." Under Northam's proposal, funding for Virginia's agricultural best management practices cost-share program, the technical experts needed to assist farmers, and nonpoint source water quality programs would increase to \$90 million a year by fiscal year 2020. Another \$50 million would be dedicated to the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund to help urban and suburban areas reduce pollution that washes off of impervious surfaces. Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring says farmers and forest landowners across the Commonwealth have been key partners in water quality and land conservation efforts and they have long recognized the importance of protecting the Chesapeake Bay. Northam wants these commitments to be the first installments of a multi-year series of investments. According to a release, when these funds are added to other currently appropriated and proposed funds for fiscal years 2019 and 2020, this proposal would total \$492 million through fiscal year 2022 and \$773 million through 2024. The release adds the five-year plan would represent the largest investment in water quality needs in the history of Virginia and the largest dedication of consistent clean water funding ever. Northam also proposes increasing funding for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation by \$11 million to support data-driven land conservation strategies that were outlined in April. He also wants about \$2.5 million to begin returning the Department of Environmental Quality to its previous staffing levels so it can properly regulate and enforce environmental standards and implementing the recommendations of Executive order Six, which was signed earlier this year...

AUGUSTA FREE PRESS

Northam proposes investments to accelerate Chesapeake Bay cleanup Gov. Ralph Northam today announced his proposed budget will feature major investments in the protection of Virginia's natural resources, the first installment of a historic commitment to water quality needs and consistent clean water funding. The governor's funding strategy would accelerate Virginia's progress towards its 2025 targets for reduction in the Chesapeake Bay and ensure that the Commonwealth meets its cleanup goals. "There is no time like the present to take action to ensure the protection of Virginia's natural resources, and these historic investments will ensure that the Commonwealth honors its commitments to improve water quality and to protect the progress we've made on restoring the Chesapeake Bay," said Northam. "We have a unique opportunity with this budget to make investments that will yield benefits for generations of Virginians to come, and I look forward to working with the General Assembly on this front." The governor's proposal would increase funding for Virginia's unique and successful agricultural best management practices (BMP) cost share program, the technical experts needed to assist farmers, and several important nonpoint source water quality programs to \$90 million per year by FY 2020. It also dedicates \$50 million to the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) to help urban and suburban areas reduce pollution coming off of impervious surfaces...

CHESTERFIELD OBSERVER

Sen. Rosalyn Dance shuts down environmentalists at coal ash town hall A representative of a Northern Virginia based environmental advocacy group stormed out of a town hall hosted by state Sen. Rosalyn Dance last Wednesday at the county's Central Library after she wouldn't let him participate in a public question-and-answer period with officials from Dominion Energy. "I'm sorry you all didn't get the real facts tonight," said a clearly frustrated Dean Naujoks to the approximately 50 citizens gathered in a conference room at the library. He grabbed his coat and left just before the conclusion of the 90-minute meeting. Naujoks, a riverkeeper with the nonprofit Potomac Riverkeeper Network, traveled to Chesterfield from his Alexandria home to attend the town hall, which Dance scheduled to discuss Dominion's coal ash

ponds with residents of the 16th Senate District. Coal ash, a byproduct of burning coal to generate electricity, has been found to contain heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and chromium. There is nearly 28 million cubic yards of the material stored in ponds at the utility giant's Chesterfield, Possum Point, Bremo and Chesapeake power stations. The Virginia General Assembly is expected to vote during the 2019 session on a closure plan for those ponds. Dance, a Democrat elected in 2015, represents eastern Chesterfield – including the Dominion power station at Dutch Gap – as well as parts of Richmond, Petersburg, Hopewell, Prince George and Dinwiddie. She made it clear from the outset of the meeting that she was primarily interested in hearing from her constituents. "This is my town hall and I have my rules," Dance said. "I know there are others here who are not my constituents and that's fine, but this is not a free-for-all." Following a presentation by Jason Williams, Dominion's environmental manager, Dance opened the floor for citizen questions or comments. Midlothian resident Bob Olsen, president of the local environmental group Hands Across the Lake, asked Williams how much of the approximately 14.9 million cubic yards of coal ash that is stored at the Chesterfield Power Station had been transported there from Dominion facilities in other parts of Virginia. Williams said he didn't have an exact figure, but that the quantity of coal ash that has been brought in from outside Chesterfield was "minimal" compared to the ash generated over the station's 70 years of operation. Before Olsen could ask a follow-up question, Dance interjected and again noted the meeting had been scheduled specifically for her constituents. "I respectfully agree with your ability to be here because it's open to everyone. But I would like to hear first from people within the 16th Senate District," she said. "If you would respectfully allow us to do that, I'm sure [Dominion] would have a sidebar with you to make sure your questions are answered or make arrangements to do so."...

FORT HUNT HERALD

Warner, Kaine tout industrial hemp, Chesapeake Bay clean-up provisions of U.S. Farm Bill Virginia Senators Mark Warner (D) and Tim Kaine (D) are touting the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill in the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2018, which contains additional funding to clean up the Chesapeake Bay watershed as well as a provision enabling farmers to legally grow industrial-grade hemp. The bill is now being considered by the U.S. House, where it is expected to pass. "This compromise bill includes significant victories for Virginia, including measures to expand successful Chesapeake Bay clean-up efforts, protect Virginia commodities like dairy and cotton, and maintain funding for a nutrition assistance program that Virginia families depend on," Senators Warner and Kaine said in a joint press statement on Dec. 11. "And, after decades of waiting, states will be allowed to choose the best way to regulate production of industrial hemp. "We are proud to support this bipartisan legislation that finally puts an end to a ban that has held back our farmers from participating in the emerging industrial hemp market — an industry that will help bring new business to Virginia and create new jobs."...

INSIDE NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Dominion Energy open to coal ash cap; legislators say Possum Point pond has to go Dominion Energy is still open to covering its coal ash pond at Possum Point Power Station, but state Sen. Scott Surovell said he plans to draft legislation prohibiting the process also known as cap in place. About 65 people attended a town hall meeting Dec. 11 to learn about Dominion's latest report on recycling or other uses for its coal ash, the waste left from burning coal for electricity. The town hall was hosted by Surovell, D-36th District; Del. Luke Torian, D-52nd District; Del. Jennifer Carroll Foy, D-2nd District; and Dominion Energy representatives at Dumfries Elementary School. A Dominion report in November outlined a plan that would allow the company to recycle coal ash or sell it to companies for reuse in concrete or brick, a process that encapsulates the ash, making it safer, said Jason Williams, Dominion's director of environmental services. The company received proposals from 10 companies, Williams said, adding that Dominion recycles 500,000 tons of coal ash a year for use in cement and wall board. The cost for Dominion to pay contractors to recycle or reuse coal ash from Possum Point would be \$216 million to \$727 million, and it would take seven to 11 years to complete, according to Dominion's report. Regardless of how the company plans to dispose of coal ash at Possum Point, the company has 15 years to close the pond, Williams said. Dominion could use a variety of disposal techniques. Surovell said he didn't like Dominion's original proposal to cap in place the coal ash ponds, saying he feared it would be irresponsible to "cross your fingers" and hope coal ash doesn't leak into the surrounding water or environment. "I wanted to haul it away or recycle," Surovell said. "We are not going to leave this stuff in place." The General Assembly passed legislation earlier this year that required Dominion to seek proposals from companies to gauge the market for recycling coal ash or for its beneficial use purposes. The company's report on recycling and other options looked at how to remediate sites in the state, including Possum Point's 4 million cubic yards of coal ash. "The decision to recycle should be considered along

with other closure options, including closure-in-place (with groundwater remediation if necessary) or closure by removal and landfilling," the report stated. "Considerations including stakeholder input, time to achieve closure, regulatory compliance, risk, feasibility, and cost should all be taken into account in this decision process."...

ALEXANDRIA NEWS.ORG

EPA Proposes New Rule For Defining "Waters Of The United States" On Dec. 11, 2018, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Army signed a proposed rule revising the definition of "waters of the United States" to clarify federal authority under the Clean Water Act. The new rule would roll back Clean Water Act protections from vast networks of streams, wetlands and smaller waterways that feed drinking water sources across the country. "This proposed revision undermines this nation's fundamental clean water protections," said Chesapeake Bay Foundation Vice President Lisa Feldt. "The new definition would remove federal protections from certain waters and wetlands that aren't otherwise protected by state law. In the Chesapeake Bay watershed, this includes waters in Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia, which are governed by federal law. Additionally, the revised definition could prevent states with more strict protections, such as Maryland, from holding upstream states accountable for water pollution they allow to cross state lines. "Clean water is a right, not a luxury. The Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint is working. Now is not the time for the federal government to weaken efforts to reduce pollution," Feldt said. Under the agencies' proposal, traditional navigable waters, tributaries to those waters, certain ditches, certain lakes and ponds, impoundments of jurisdictional waters, and wetlands adjacent to jurisdictional waters would be federally regulated. It also details what are not "waters of the United States," such as features that only contain water during or in response to rainfall; groundwater; many ditches, including most roadside or farm ditches; prior converted cropland; stormwater control features; and waste treatment systems. The agencies believe this proposed definition appropriately identifies waters that should be subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act while respecting the role of states and tribes in managing their own land and water resources. States and many tribes have existing regulations that apply to waters within their borders, whether or not they are considered "waters of the United States." The agencies' proposal gives states and tribes more flexibility in determining how best to manage their land and water resources while protecting the nation's navigable waters as intended by Congress when it enacted the Clean Water Act...

WINCHESTER STAR

State has \$850000 in grant money available for rotational grazing, stream protection **WINCHESTER** — The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) will disperse \$850,000 in federal grant money to environmental organizations for rotational grazing and stream buffer projects in Frederick and Clarke counties, as well as other counties in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, Gov. Ralph Northam announced recently. The grant, which comes from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, is part of a multi-state proposal led by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving water quality in the bay and related waterways in six states and Washington, D.C. The money will be used in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia (Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham counties) and administered through agencies like the state DOF and the Virginia Cooperative Extension, according to a news release. Matt Kowalski, a Chesapeake Bay Foundation watershed restoration scientist who lives in Woodstock, said the money will be primarily used for livestock farmers who want to transition their operations to a rotational grazing system. Rotational grazing involves devising a network of grazing plots on a given piece of farmland and scheduling a rotational calendar to move the livestock from one plot to another, giving each area time to regenerate. "It rests," Kowalski said of the grass. "It develops healthier roots. Healthier roots are better for water." For farmers, rotational grazing can prove profitable as well, Kowalski said, as it cuts down on the need to make hay and reduces feed costs. "But it doesn't take any additional acreage." Cost-saving measures such as rotational grazing can also lead to more farmers selling their products in local markets instead of shipping them west for processing, Kowalski said. "It's kind of a win, win, win." Money also will be used to build water systems for farmers who agree to get their cattle out of area streams, as well as the replanting of trees and shrubs along the stream banks, Kowalski said...

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Va.)

Northam wants to boost spending on water quality **RICHMOND, Va. (AP)** — Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam wants to increase state spending on efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and improve the state's water quality. Northam announced parts of his upcoming state budget plan Wednesday related to water issues. The Democratic governor wants to increase funding for a program meant to help farmers improve water quality. He's also proposing to boost funding for

a fund that helps cities and suburbs reduce pollution from storm-water runoff. Northam said the spending would speed up efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. The governor also wants to increase staffing at the state Department of Environmental Quality. Northam will present his full budget proposal next week. His spending proposals will have to pass the Republican-controlled General Assembly next year to go into effect.

MISCELLANEOUS

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE

What You Need to Know If You Already Scheduled Leave and Your Agency Shuts Down Some federal workers who booked vacations between Christmas and the end of the year could find themselves taking unpaid leave for the trouble, if Congress cannot reach a deal to fund the government within the next 10 days. Lawmakers have until Dec. 21 to come to an agreement to fund a variety of agencies and departments that don't already have full-year appropriations or there will be a partial government shutdown. Among those still awaiting a funding bill are the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, State, Interior, Agriculture, Treasury, Commerce, Homeland Security and Justice departments. A partial closure is looking more likely after a meeting Tuesday between President Trump and Democratic leaders that devolved into a shouting match, in which Trump said he would be "proud" to shut down the government if he did not receive a bill with \$5 billion in funding for his proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. If an agreement cannot be reached by the Dec. 21 deadline, where does that leave federal employees when it comes to previously scheduled time off? Workers cannot substitute paid leave for furloughs if the government is closed. This means that if an employee has already scheduled leave, either for a vacation or medical leave, those paid days off would be cancelled during a shutdown. Workers would have to accept unpaid furloughs. Congress often approves shutdown pay retroactively for furloughed workers, meaning those who took vacation during their furloughs could eventually get paid for the days they were gone, but those days would not be counted as vacation time. For employees deemed essential by their agency, the outlook is bleak. Their already scheduled leave would be cancelled during a shutdown and they would be required to come into work or be labeled "Absent Without Official Leave." According to guidance from the Office of Personnel Management, there are some flexibilities encouraging managers to allow essential employees to use telework or alternative work schedules in cases where they must be absent for "brief or intermittent periods." If those programs cannot sufficiently accommodate the employee or the agency, the agency must furlough the employee for the time he or she misses.

BLOOMBERG ENVIRONMENT

Don't Flush Your Drugs, EPA Tells Healthcare Facilities Unused drugs and other pharmaceutical waste don't belong in the sewer system. The EPA is trying to hammer that message home in a Dec. 12 regulation (RIN: 2050-AG39) clarifying how hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions manage large quantities of unused pharmaceuticals. The goal is to keep them out of the sewer system where they can eventually wind up in nearby rivers and lakes and harm aquatic life. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act rule, three years in the making, defines how health care institutions and others handle pharmaceutical waste. It intends to create an easier way for these institutions to track the unused drugs they deal with, which could save the industry up to \$15 million in compliance costs every year. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the rule will prevent up to 2,300 tons of pharmaceutical waste from entering sewer systems every year...

Farm Bill Clears House After Removal of Trump-Backed Work Rules The House cleared farm legislation that renews agricultural subsidies and food aid for low-income families without a controversial provision backed by conservatives and President Donald Trump that would have toughened work requirements for those seeking to qualify for food stamps. The bill passed by a tally of 369 to 47 on Dec. 12, a day after the Senate passed it on a vote of 87-13. The measure now goes to Trump, who has indicated he supports it. The five-year, \$867 billion legislation, which also would extend federal crop insurance, scrapped an earlier House provision that would have added work requirements for older

food stamp recipients and those with older children. The provision had been included in the House version of the measure and was removed during negotiations with the Senate, where it faced opposition...

Axing Outside Panel of Air Scientists Irks Past EPA Advisers About a dozen former EPA advisers exhorted the agency Dec. 12 to reinstate a panel of scientists charged with reviewing federal standards for airborne particle pollution. They all but took over a routine public meeting of the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, which was reviewing the latest science on the risks posed by particulate matter, which are fine airborne particles of pollution that are linked with respiratory illnesses. The EPA's seven-member advisory committee lacks the scientific expertise necessary to weigh that data without input from a panel of subject matter experts, past advisers warned. "Today you should ask yourselves, do we have the necessary expertise in the most critical of scientific disciplines? Clearly the answer is no," said Christopher Frey, a former chairman of the committee and a professor in North Carolina State University's civil, construction and environmental Engineering department...

Final Farm Bill's Conservation Measures Draw Bipartisan Praise Democrats and Republicans alike lauded expansion of key farm bill conservation programs that give participating farmers and ranchers more flexibility, as the legislation cleared its final congressional hurdle Dec. 12. The House voted 369-47 to approve the same farm bill (H.R. 2) conference report that the Senate passed Dec. 11. The congressional action sends the five-year reauthorization to President Donald Trump for his signature. The farm bill increases, from 5 percent to 10 percent, the spending under the Agriculture Department's Environmental Quality Incentives Program for protecting wildlife habitat. It increases acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)— the nation's largest private land conservation program—to 27 million acres while allowing farmers and ranchers more flexibility for haying and grazing...

GREENWIRE / E&E NEWS

Bill would authorize funding for PFAS testing Two House lawmakers from Michigan yesterday introduced a bill that would authorize funding to test for toxic chemicals that have turned up in drinking water. Reps. Dan Kildee (D) and Jack Bergman (R) introduced the "PFAS Detection Act" to authorize \$50 million in funding over the next five years for air, soil and water testing for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. PFAS have been widely used for decades in consumer and industrial products from firefighting foam to nonstick cookware. The bill would direct the U.S. Geological Survey to test for PFAS in surface water nationwide, including in lakes, streams and wetlands, as well as aquifers. And the legislation calls for the prioritization of testing of drinking water sources near sites with known or suspected PFAS pollution...

EPA picks Pa. regulator to oversee restoration program Dana Aunkst will be the new director of EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program starting later this month, the agency announced today. The program is a regional partnership formed in 1983 that oversees the restoration of the bay. "Dana has the leadership skills, experience and commitment we need to lead the Chesapeake Bay Office," EPA Region 3 Administrator Cosmo Servidio said in a statement. "He has tremendous skill at building partnerships and creating a shared vision among geographically diverse stakeholders." Aunkst worked 22 years at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection before being tapped to serve as acting head of the state agency after his predecessor resigned following accusations of sending pornography on his state-issued computer (E&E News PM, Oct. 2, 2014). Aunkst, whose first official day will be Dec. 23, has a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Penn State University. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners," Aunkst said in a statement. "I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation's largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed." The program lost its six-year head nearly a year ago when Nicholas DiPasquale retired. After departing, DiPasquale shared his concerns that the Trump administration's funding cuts to the program's newspaper, the *Bay Journal*, were "totally ideologically driven" (Greenwire, Jan. 4).

How does Trump compare to Obama on WOTUS? The Trump administration proposed a "waters of the U.S." rule yesterday, restricting Clean Water Act protection for a range of wetlands and waterways. The proposal would pull back federal oversight of at least 51 percent of wetlands and 18 percent of streams — many of which had been protected since the Reagan administration. Supporters of the proposal say it would simplify Clean Water Act permitting for development in and near swamps, bogs, marshes and isolated waterways. Critics say it would hamstring federal oversight of resources that cleanse pollution, buffer storms and provide wildlife habitat. How does President Trump's

WOTUS definition compare to the Obama administration's equally controversial Clean Water Rule? E&E News created a sample watershed to illustrate how the two differ....

As EPA morale plunges, survey points at senior leadership EPA has seen morale backslide among its employees over the past year. The agency lost six points in 2018 for its employees' job satisfaction and commitment, according to a report released today by the Partnership for Public Service. With a score of 57.5, EPA was ranked 22nd among similar midsize federal agencies in the group's "Best Places to Work" survey. The federal government's overall employee engagement index fell as well, though not as precipitously as EPA's, by 0.6 point for a mark of 62.2 in 2018. That contrasts with last year when the government's morale score rose by 2.1 points from 2016. This year's scores across the majority of agencies fell, coming toward the end of the second year of the Trump administration that has proposed a federal hiring freeze, deep budget cuts and pushback against pay raises. Mallory Barg Bulman, vice president of research and evaluation for the partnership, said about 60 percent of federal agencies saw their scores decline this year. "Last year, it was almost the opposite," she said, with about 70 percent of federal agencies seeing their scores rise. "It's really a tale of two governments," Barg Bulman said in an interview. "You have some agencies with leaders that are committed to their agencies, committed to their missions. You and I both know that federal employees are deeply committed to their missions." But leadership elsewhere in the federal government hasn't helped morale. "Then you have agencies where leaders are not familiar with their agencies or want to fundamentally change the mission of their agencies," she said... Asked why EPA had a steep decline in its score, Barg Bulman noted that employees gave poor marks to the agency's senior leadership. "Last year, it was one of the few agencies that did drop. This year, it dropped a lot more," she said. "The score for the organization's senior leaders went down by 7.1 points but the organization's supervisors went up by 0.3 point. That tells me that there is a strong career workforce holding down the fort." EPA has seen a leadership churn over the past year. Scott Pruitt, President Trump's first EPA administrator, was plagued by scandal and eventually resigned in July after being swamped with allegations of excessive spending and mismanagement. The day his resignation was announced, agency employees left headquarters celebrating the news...

WIND ENERGY: Turbines vs. eagles debate continues amid new science The sometimes lethal interactions between eagles and wind turbines have given flight to an important technical debate that's about to press the Fish and Wildlife Service a little harder...

NEW YORK TIMES

More Floods and More Droughts: Climate Change Delivers Both More records for both wet and dry weather are being set around the globe, often with disastrous consequences for the people facing such extremes, according to a study published Wednesday that offered new evidence of climate change's impacts in the here and now. Extreme rainfall, and the extreme lack of it, affects untold numbers of people, taxing economies, disrupting food production, creating unrest and prompting migrations. So, factors that push regions of the world to exceptional levels of flooding and drought can shape the fate of nations. "Climate change will likely continue to alter the occurrence of record-breaking wet and dry months in the future," the study predicts, "with severe consequences for agricultural production and food security." Heavy rainfall events, with severe flooding, are occurring more often in the central and Eastern United States, Northern Europe and northern Asia. The number of months with record-high rainfall increased in the central and Eastern United States by more than 25 percent between 1980 and 2013...

THE HILL

EPA names Pennsylvania official to lead Chesapeake Bay cleanup The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has hired a Pennsylvania environmental official to lead the program dedicated to cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay's pollution. Dana Aunkst, deputy secretary for water programs at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, will take over later this month as director of the Chesapeake Bay Program, the agency said in a statement. The program works with six states and Washington, D.C., on a number of efforts related to the iconic bay and its watershed, like its major "pollution diet" and a pollution enforcement strategy. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build upon the accomplishments to date by EPA and its partners," Aunkst said. "I look forward to working collaboratively with our stakeholders in protecting our nation's largest estuary and the local waterways throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed." Aunkst has worked in Pennsylvania's environment agency for 33 years, including senior roles like acting director and deputy director. Nicholas DiPasquale, the previous head of the program for six years, retired in December

2017. While environmentalists and states in the Chesapeake's watershed have cheered the program as a national model for cleaning up major water bodies, the Trump administration has sought to slash its funding. President Trump's first budget request for fiscal year 2018 would have eliminated the Chesapeake Bay program and other similar local programs, like those for the Great Lakes and Washington's Puget Sound. The second budget proposal would have cut their funding by about 90 percent. The Chesapeake Bay program is based in Annapolis, Md., and is administered as part of the EPA's Mid-Atlantic office in Philadelphia.